



Sept 13, 2017 In The Know Summary

## **RADICAL CANDOR:**

### **Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity**

by Kim Scott

#### What did we discuss?

In our most recent session, **Janice Shack-Marquez** led an exciting discussion of how to be a better boss – and a better colleague – as we reviewed Kim Scott’s recently published book, [\*Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity\*](#).

***What’s “radical candor?” It’s sometime brutal honesty – the idea that if you’re going to be an effective leader, you can’t be bound by “if you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.”***

Scott, a management veteran of both Google and Apple and current advisor to a number of technology companies, writes about the value of “BS-free” workplaces where trust and honesty are as important as skill or passion. She believes that creating such an environment is the responsibility of leadership – starting with how they guide their teams and deliver feedback. After years of first-hand experience, trial-and-error, and ultimately success, that’s the idea behind *Radical Candor*.

Scott’s 2x2 model, featured prominently on the cover of the book, explained it visually:



According to Scott, the first step to building a culture of radical candor is to be vulnerable and ask for feedback about yourself as a leader. Only then can you begin offering positive feedback to others, and then you can encourage feedback between employees. Challenging others and encouraging them to challenge you helps build trusting relationships.

Care is also critical – in the book, Scott calls attention to the fact that people often advise leaders how to be less challenging, but rarely teach them how to be more caring. Leaders must find time for real conversations, and getting to know each other’s motivations as human beings.

As you see, radical candor isn’t simply harsh reality. Janice explained that Scott’s approach balances caring personally and challenging directly to drive people to action. Because, as she punctuated with a

Theodore Roosevelt quote, “no one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

**How did we dive deeper into the subject matter?**

Janice challenged our group to some introspection, which led to a powerful discussion around the notion that we *don't see things as they are, we see them as we are*. Janice also reviewed tools and techniques for establishing trust, and how to get, give, and encourage praise and criticism. Lastly, she asked us to be more aware, and to start noticing things that are going well, then offering feedback on an on-going basis.

**So, what did we learn?**

When people trust you and believe you care about them, they are much more likely to:

1. Accept and act on your praise and criticism
2. Tell you what they really think about what you are doing well, and, more importantly, not doing so well
3. Engage in the same behavior with one another, meaning less pushing the rock up the hill again and again
4. Embrace their role on the team
5. Focus on getting results

We also learned that in many cases, feedback is actually more about the person delivering it than the person receiving it. This is where leaders must be humble, as well, understanding that they can be right about the results they want to achieve, but still need to let others figure out how to get there.

To that end, as leaders, and sometimes as colleagues, we have to get comfortable with telling people when they've screwed up, and understand that candy-coating does no favors for the employee or the company. As simple as it sounds, this approach is still very uncommon in most organizations.

***Radical candor is about balance. To manage effectively, we must care personally and challenge directly.***

**How can I learn more?**

- [Laura's Blog](#)
- [Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity](#), by Kim Scott
- [Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace](#) by Christine Porath
- [Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action](#) by Simon Sinek

\*The Chesapeake Bay Organizational Development Network (CBODN) Book Club is a monthly session, open to all learners. Each month, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, or coaching. There's no obligation to pre-read the book. The session summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. [Register here](#) for upcoming events. For a listing of [all Book Club summaries, click here](#).